

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 13, 2015

The Honorable Gina McCarthy  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator McCarthy,

Thank you for developing a rule to limit methane emissions from new and modified sources in the oil and gas sector and to enhance restrictions on volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions. Along with the standards proposed for systemic leak detection and repair, we urge you to include requirements focused on preventing sudden, unusually large natural gas discharges like the one ongoing at the Aliso Canyon storage facility near Porter Ranch, California. We also ask you to initiate a rulemaking to address existing sources of methane.

In the past three months, the Aliso Canyon leak has released millions of pounds of methane, dramatically increasing the statewide emission of this potent greenhouse gas and disrupting the lives of thousands of Californians. Stringent requirements for leak detection and shutoff capabilities could prevent such a disaster at new storage facilities, while also curbing chronic leakage in the natural gas production and transmission systems. To be most effective, the new standards should apply to a comprehensive set of gas processing and storage equipment, including both surface and underground components. Where appropriate, they should reflect lessons your agency is learning in its investigation of the Aliso Canyon leak.

Establishing a strong rule for new and modified sources is a step in the right direction, but it is crucial that you follow it with standards for existing sources of methane. As you are likely aware, studies indicate that nearly 90% of methane emissions in 2018 will come from sources that already exist. We encourage you to begin a rulemaking as soon as possible to bring those existing sources into the regulatory framework you are founding now.

Sincerely,

  
Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

  
Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator